

How to Weave a Basket, a Primer

by Norm Kidder

Basketry techniques include virtually every possible way there is to attach one piece of material to another without using glue or pins, although glue may be used to coat a basket to make it waterproof, or small seed proof. In looking at the common styles of basketry around the world, I like to break them first into three super-categories, and then further divide these (note: this is my own analysis for beginners, not a standardized ideal used by basket makers). I am using a technique common to botany keys going from major differences, down to the smaller.

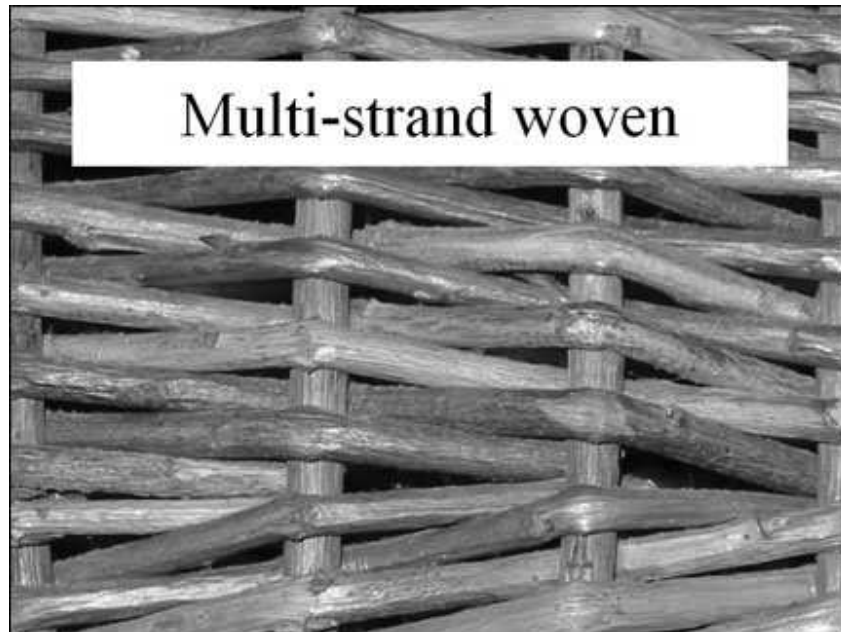
I. Intertwined: using over-under techniques.

A. Woven: involves moving strands around more or less stationary ribs, similar to the warp and weft on a loom.



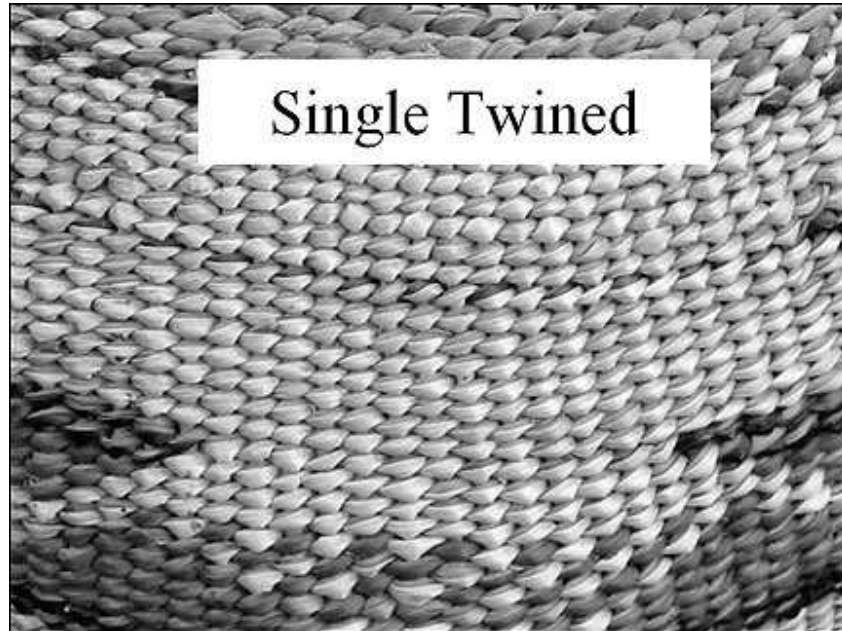
1. Single/parallel strand woven: a single weaver goes behind one or more ribs, then in front of one or more ribs in a pattern. The strands fill the space solidly.

a) Single strand/single spiral: a single strand goes around the whole circumference of the basket (or back and forth) until it ends, then is replaced. This is the technique I learned at camp using a wooden base with holes in it to start the ribs. It is the easiest to teach kids and other beginners. It only requires that you use an uneven number of ribs, so that each succeeding row of weaving goes over where the one before went under, so that the rows lock each other in place. Adding ribs must be done two at a time to maintain the pattern. Often, the rib count will double at intervals, creating a design element as well as allowing the basket to grow rounder. At summer camp, we just made the space between the ribs wider and looser to let the basket get bigger and used a stiff rim to hold the basket together.



b) Multi-strand/multi-spiral: a separate strand starts behind each rib and spirals steeply upward paralleling its neighbors. Changing the rib count requires ending the weaving with a single solid row and beginning again. This technique has limited potential for use in bowl shaped baskets, and is best suited to fill large straight-sided or cone shaped areas where the rib count is constant. A cone shape can be achieved by using tapered weavers with the smallest end down. As the weavers get fatter, they force the diameter of the basket outward. This same concept can be used in many of the woven techniques as an alternative to adding or subtracting ribs.

2. Twined (twisted): two or more strands travel around the basket (or back and forth on a tray shaped piece) twisting around each other. Normally a half twist is used, which alternates the position of the twiners each time one passes behind a rib, locking the `stitchí in place (see illustration). Because it can grip the ribs tightly, open work patterns can be created.



a) Single twined: two weavers alternate behind one rib at a time. Ribs can be added in at any time necessary to achieve the desired shape. Can be used to create open work patterns.

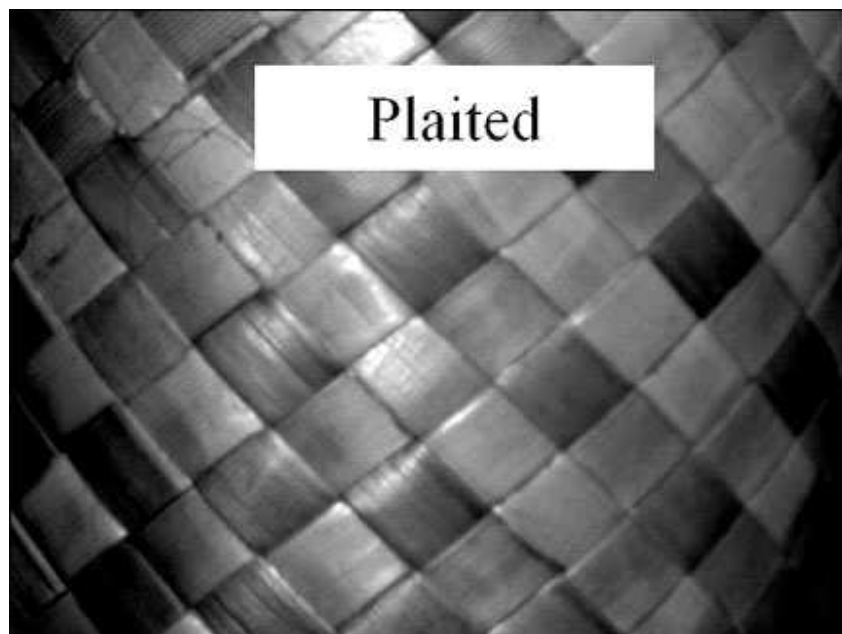


b) Double, or Diagonal Twined: two weavers alternate behind two ribs at a time, with succeeding rows offset like brickwork. To maintain the pattern, two ribs are added in on successive `stitchesí. Patterning can also be achieved using a clockwise twist ñ giving an up-to-the-right pattern, or counter-clockwise twist to give a down-to-the-right pattern. Diagonal stripes are created when the two weavers are of different colors.

c) Three (or more) Strand Twining: three or more weavers alternate in a pattern such as over two, under one, giving a slightly raised texture and steeper slant to the weaving.

d) Overlay Twining: colored strands are wrapped around the weavers to show on the principle surface of the basket. Materials can be used that are too weak to use on their own. This is a common style used with single twining in the Pacific Northwest of North America.

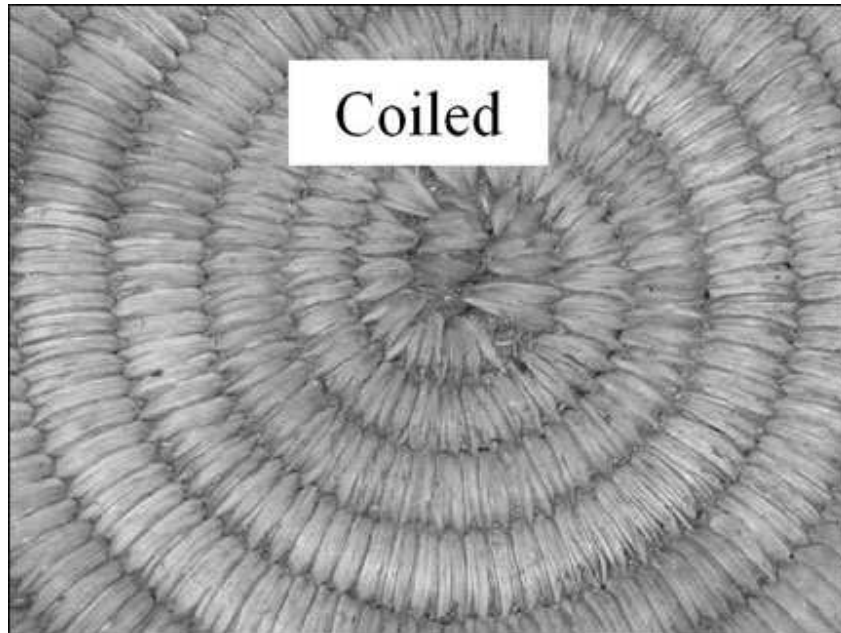
B. Plaited: typically done on the diagonal using flat strips that follow an over-under pattern with half the strips moving to the right and the other half to the left equally, so that there is no distinction of ribs and weavers, warp and weft. The Native People of the Southeastern United States used split river cane to make plaited baskets. Plaiting is also commonly used to weave mats, hats and bags in the Pacific Islands. A common feature of plaited projects is the formation of an edge by folding a strip at a 45-degree angle and sending it back in the opposite direction, sometimes forming a second layer of the basket (Tarahumara for example) or mat. Plaiting also refers to flat braided strips (very long and narrow mats?) used to make straw hats.



1) Simple Plaited: woven in `over one, under one' pattern.

2) Pattern Plaited: woven in specific patterns such as `over one, under two', which create various twill patterns, especially when different colors of weavers are used.

II. Coiled: a cordlike core is stitched in a spiral to the row below, creating a round or oval pattern that grows along its edge. Think of a braided rag rug.



A. Single Rod Coiling: one rod (stick or vine) is sewn along the edge, with the stitches passing between the previous rows.

- 1) Every stitch passes between the previous rows.
- 2) Lazy stitch ñ some stitches simply wrap around the rod, with others binding the rod to the edge of the work.

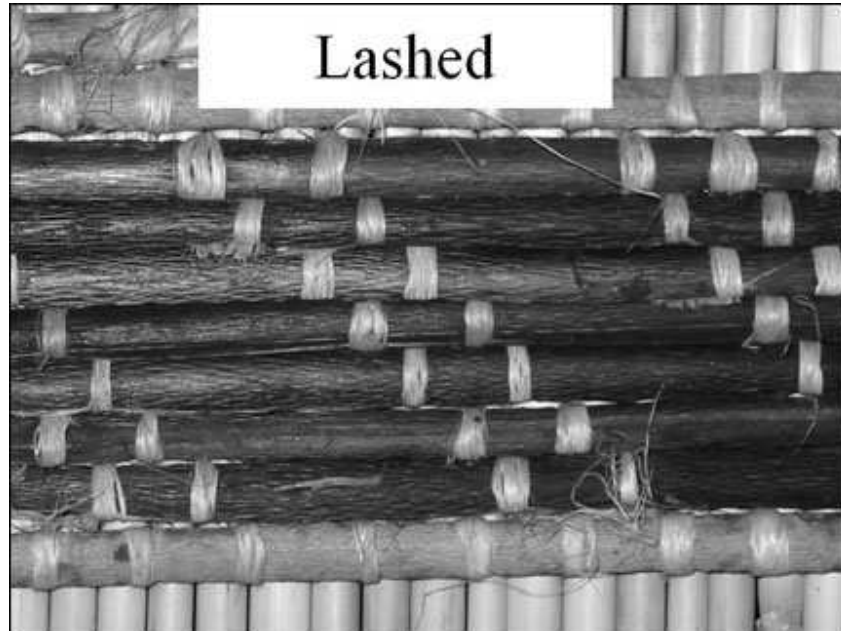
B. Three Rod Coiling: three rods (one on top over the other two) are sewn to the top rod of the previous row. Stitches can be set between the previous rows stitches or through them. This is a stronger technique than single rod.

C. Bundle Coiling: multiple fibers (pine needles, spit leaves, grass stems, etc.) are stitched down to the previous row.

- 1) Solid coiling ñ every stitch is complete, and next to the one before.
- 2) Lazy Stitch ñ as in single rod above.
- 3) Split Stitch ñ stitches angle so that they are separated, with core material showing (old fashion bee hives or skeps for example), and often split the stitches in the previous row, creating a pattern (common in pine needle work, and Papago baskets from Arizona).

III. Other: this includes everything else.

A. Combinations: Using more than one type at a time, e.g. ñ coiling over ribs, or twining over a coil, rows of twining in a woven basket, etc.



B. Lashed or tied baskets: using cordage or fibers to tie the parts of the basket together. A raft is a large, stiff lashed basket, a house frame for a thatched, domed house is an upside down lashed basket.

1) Lashed over ribs: resembles a twined or woven basket.

2) Lashed over coils: radial lines of lashing ñ see the article in BPT #17 by Alice Tulloch and Judith Polanich (page 43) ñ Uíkuyus Basketry.

C. Sewn baskets: flat material sewn together along the edge, e.g. ñ bark berry basket.

D. Random: like a birdís nest or felt.

E. Anything else Iíve forgotten or never heard of.

Techniques world wide are closely aligned to the available materials. The Natives of the southeastern United States used river cane for many things, and used flat strips of split cane to make plaited baskets. Hawaiians used Lahala leaves in a similar manner. Plaiting works best with flat, ribbon-like materials. In California, split roots and slender stems worked well for both coiled and twined baskets, which could be worked tightly enough to hold water. Stiffer materials work well in woven work. The northern forests provided Birch Bark. Each group made the most of what was at hand and developed specific ways of cultivating and processing materials, starting the basket, adding in ribs and weavers, finishing and decorating their baskets. An expert can identify the cultural group that made a basket by analyzing these factors - sometimes even identifying the weaver.

Basket Weaving Terms and Techniques

Tools

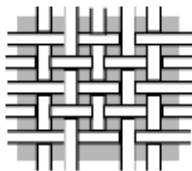
You will need a pan or pail for water, pinch clothespins, a yardstick, pencil, clippers or heavy scissors, an awl or small flat screwdriver, and a surform shaver.

Soaking

Commercial reed needs to be soaked in warm water for about ten minutes. Ash, cherry and walnut need less soaking time.

Laying Out the Base

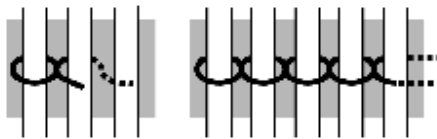
Bases are laid out in a basic over 1/under 1 weave, each row being opposite its neighbor. Start with 3 x 3 spokes, centered, and grow to the required number of spokes for each basket's directions.



Measure the base for width and length, making sure spacing is even. Halve the measurements and measure from the center for more accuracy. Unless specified, bases are generally laid out rough side up with the center of the spokes marked on the rough side.

Twining

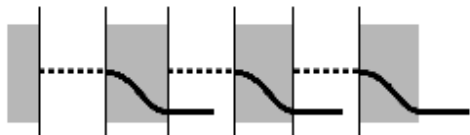
Twining is a weave normally using round reed. Use a long piece of the size specified (or use 2 pieces) and find the center. Give it a twist between your fingers (or crimp it with a needlenose pliers) and fold it in half. Hook it over a spoke and bring both ends out to the front.



Have the long ends going towards the right if you are right-handed, reverse for left. Take the top (or front) piece and put it behind the next spoke and back out to the front. Repeat until the correct number of rows is completed. Cut off ends on the inside.

Triple Twining

Triple twining is twining with three pieces of round reed instead of two pieces. Use three pieces of reed starting: one behind one spoke, one behind the next (second) spoke to the right, and one behind the next (third) spoke to the right, with ends coming out to the front.



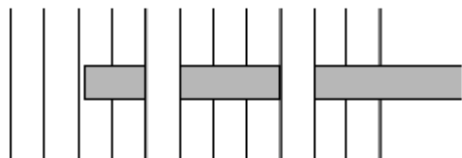
Take the piece farthest to the left and put it behind (and out to the front again) the fourth spoke. Take the piece now farthest to the left and put it behind the fifth spoke. Continue taking the weaver farthest to the left and weaving it behind the "next available spoke" - the one with nothing behind it yet. This twining is actually "over two, behind one."

Upsett

To "upsett" means to gently bend up the spokes at the base perimeters. This just makes the upward weaving easier.

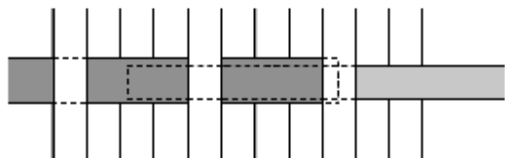
To Weave a Row

Unless specified, normal weaving is weaving one row at a time, over one/under one. Weave with the good side of the reed (smooth, less splintery side) towards the outside of the basket. Place the end of the reed on the outside of a spoke.



Weave all the way around - over one/under one - using lots of clothespins to hold it in place. The more clothespins you use, the better shaped basket you will get.

To finish a row, overlap your piece of reed by four spokes and cut it off. If woven correctly, both ends will be hidden. The end of the weaver will slip into weaving at the beginning of that same row.

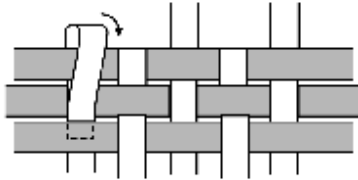


If weaving with flat/oval reed, it is best to shave off the "oval" on the bottom piece, so that the area of overlap is not so bulky.

Consecutive rows are opposite the row before it (if over/under, then under/over). Be sure to rotate your basket so that all your stop/starts will not be on the same side. Try to start far enough to the left on each side, so that you don't have to "overlap by four" around a corner. Also be sure to pack down the rows as you weave so that there are no spaces showing between the rows of weaving.

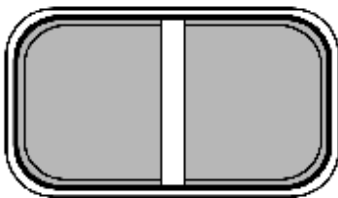
Fold and Tuck

Unless specified, you will fold and tuck the outside spokes. Fold from the outside, the end of a spoke and tuck it into a row (or rows) of weaving on the inside of the basket. It is best to fold it over, cut off any excess, and then tuck it in to get a clean finish. The inside spokes can be cut off with the top of the last row of weaving.



Wrap the Rim

To wrap the rim means to take two pieces of reed and wrap one around the inside and one around the outside of the rim, with a two to three inch overlap. Have the inside rim overlap on the opposite side that the outside ends do - and try to avoid overlapping rims at the handle. The rim covers the top row of weaving.

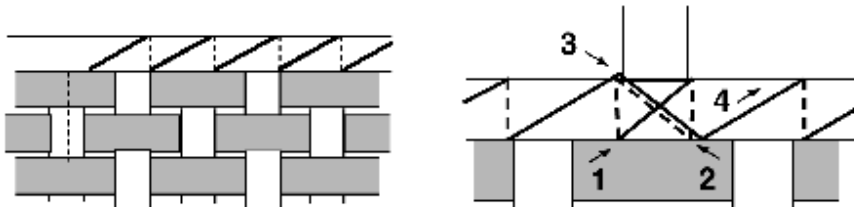


If flat/oval is being used, then both ends should be shaved down where they overlap (one on the top side/the other on the bottom side) so that they will lay down smoothly.

Rim filler is usually seagrass or round reed and lays between the two rim pieces to make a nice, clean finish to the rim.

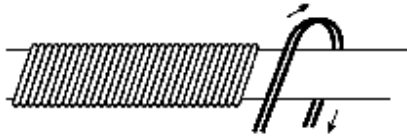
Lashing the Rim

Using 1/4" flat or cane, lash the rim to the basket (this is a lot like sewing). Bury the ends by going under the inside rim and down the inside of your basket, under the weavers. Lash a "stitch" over the rim, coming out in between the rim and your second row of weaving. Remember - your rim is covering the top row of weaving. Make a "stitch" between every set of spokes. You will want to make an "X" at the handle.



Wrapping the Handle

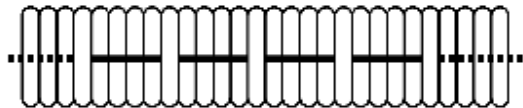
If you are using reed for the handle, you will want to wrap the handle with reed for a finished look. Start with a new piece of 1/4" flat, burying the end on the inside of the basket. Tightly wrap the handle with the 1/4" flat, each row snug to the row before it.



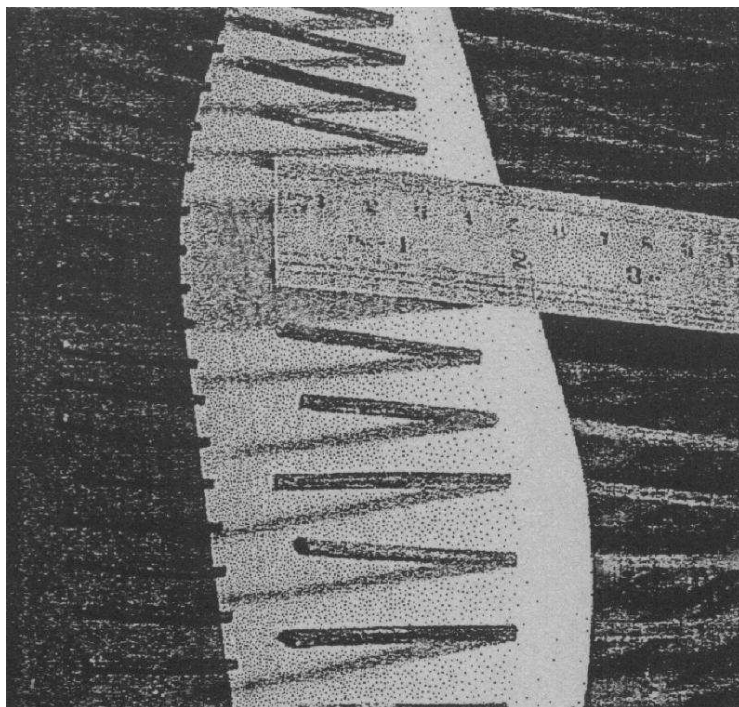
An "X" lashing can also be used: go across the handle one way, leaving space between each wrap around. Then turn around and come back across the handle, making an "X" each time.

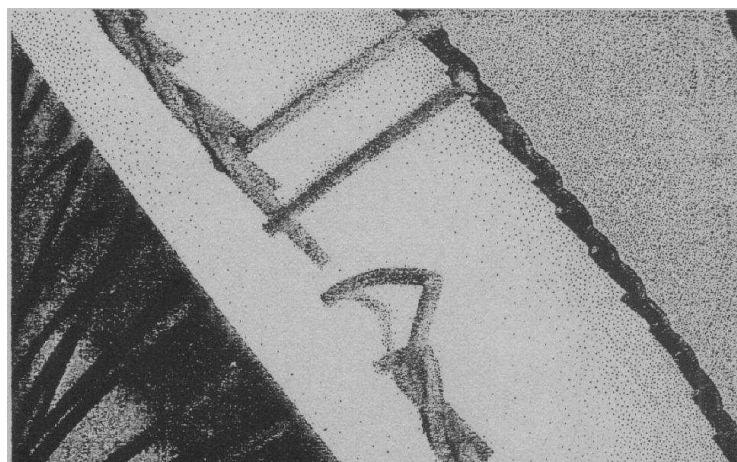
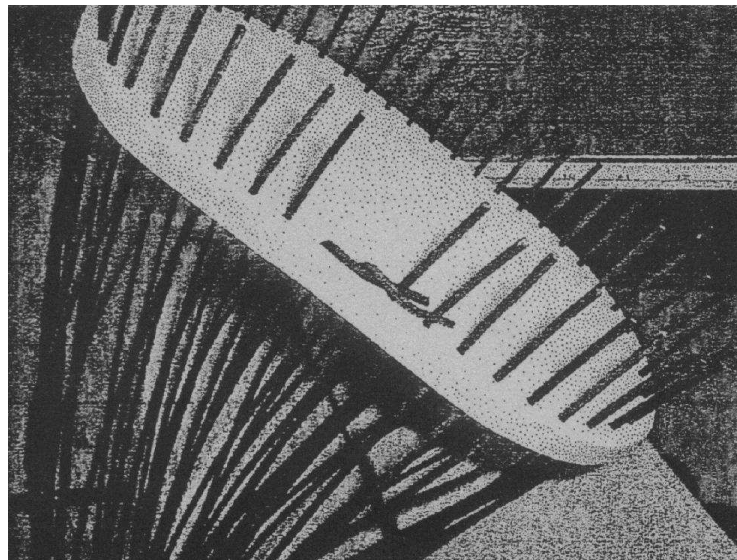
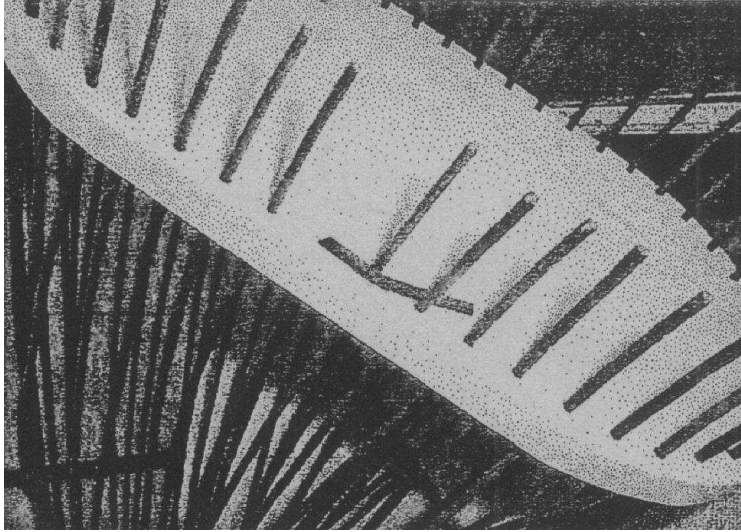


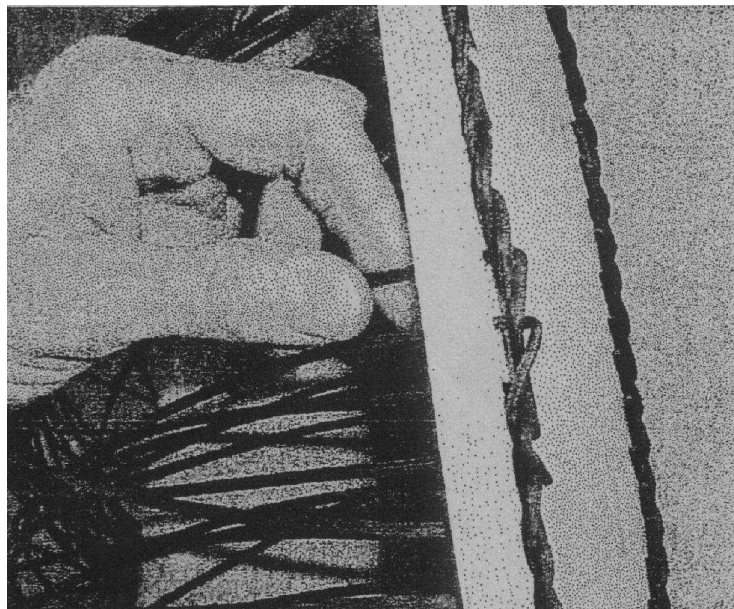
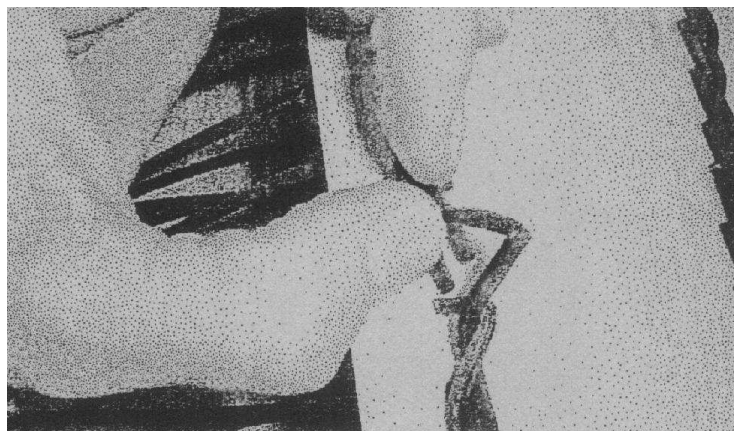
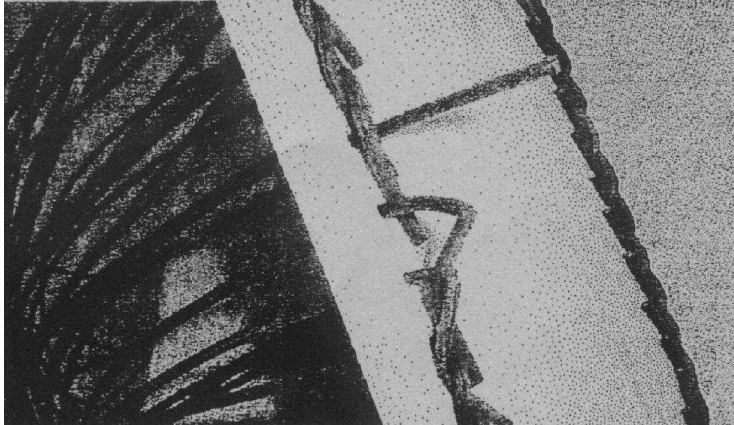
Accent pieces of dyed 1/4" flat can be used to match the basket. Lay the end of the dyed piece under a few rows to secure it, then go over and under it to create a pattern as you wrap the handle.



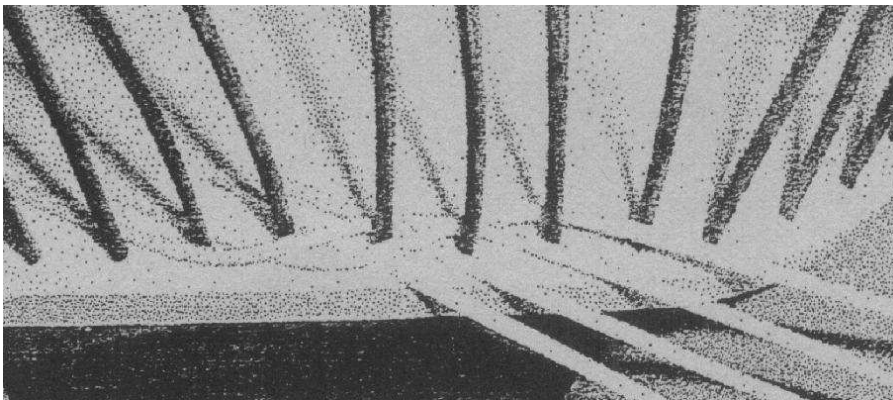
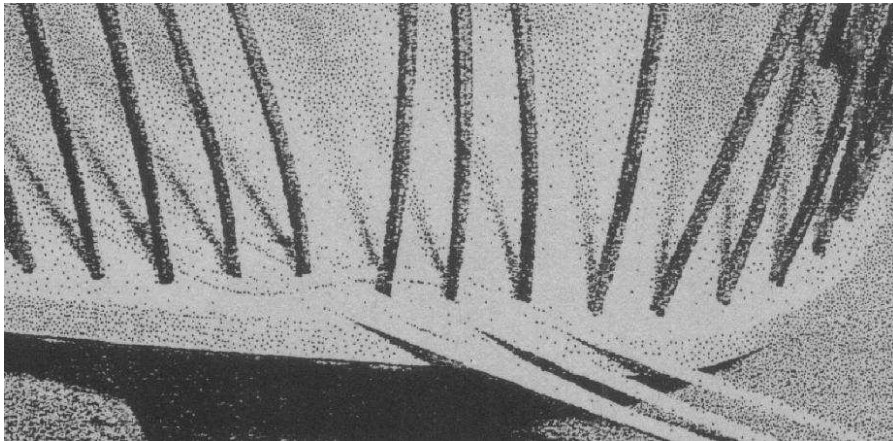
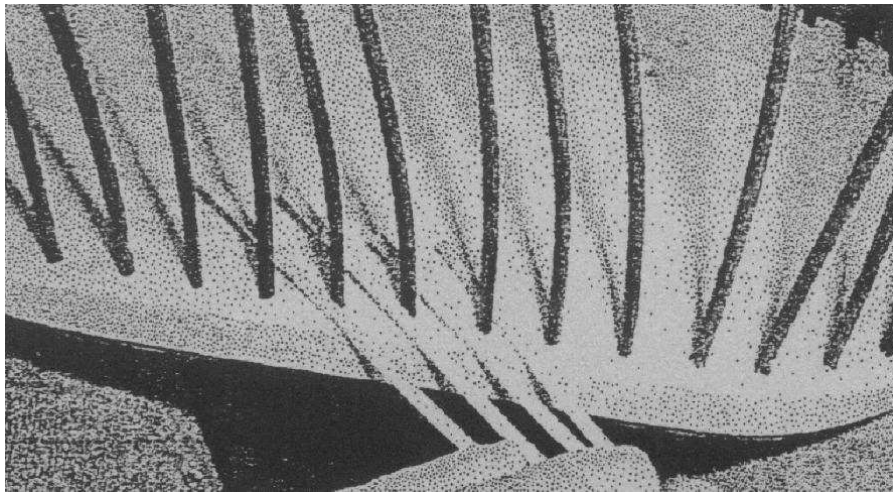
Spoking the Base

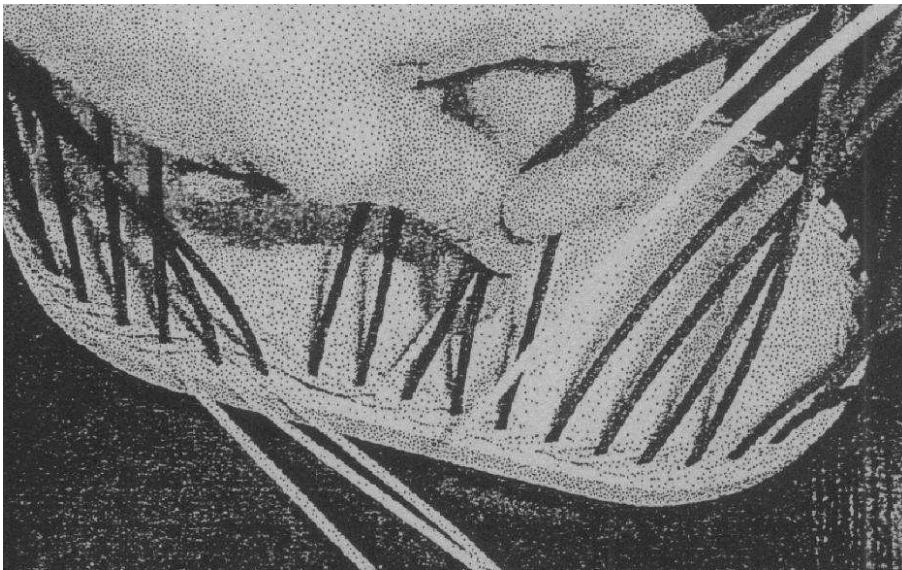
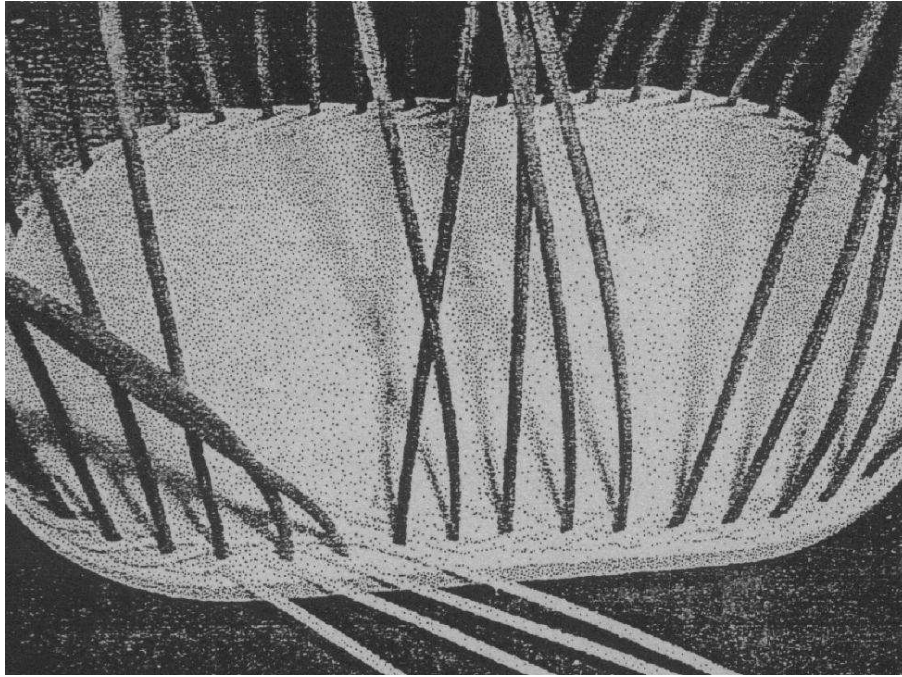


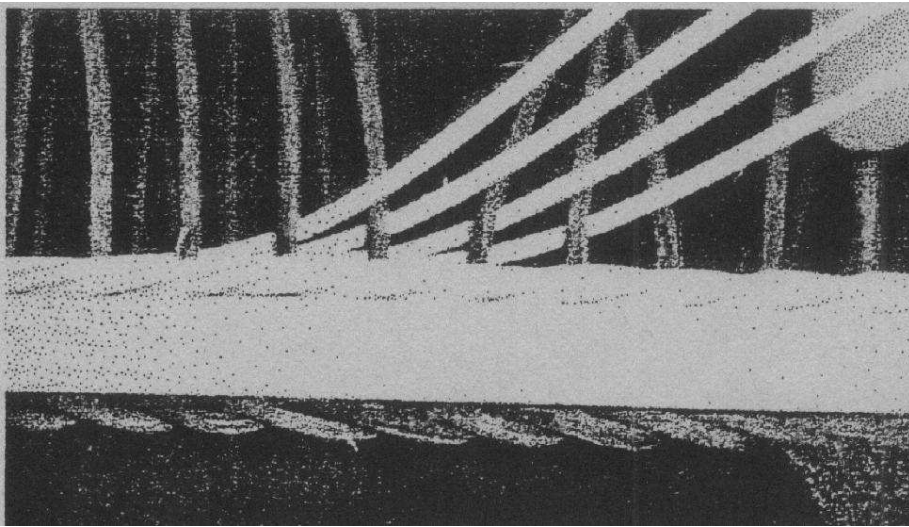
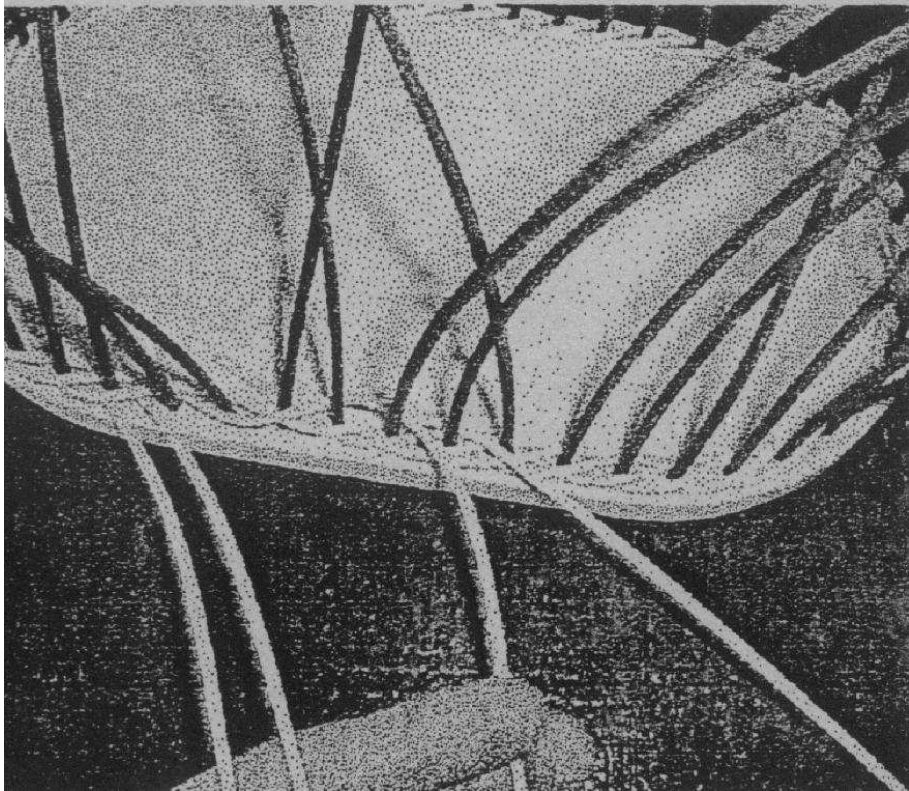


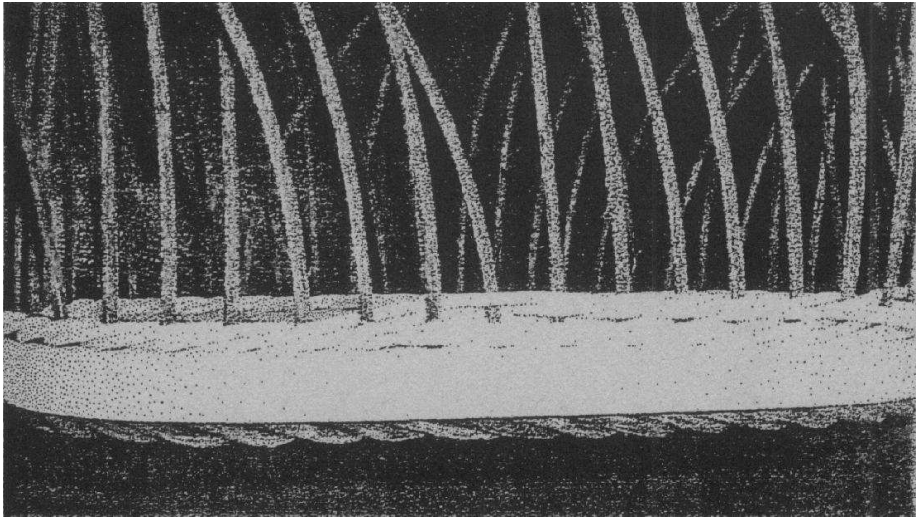
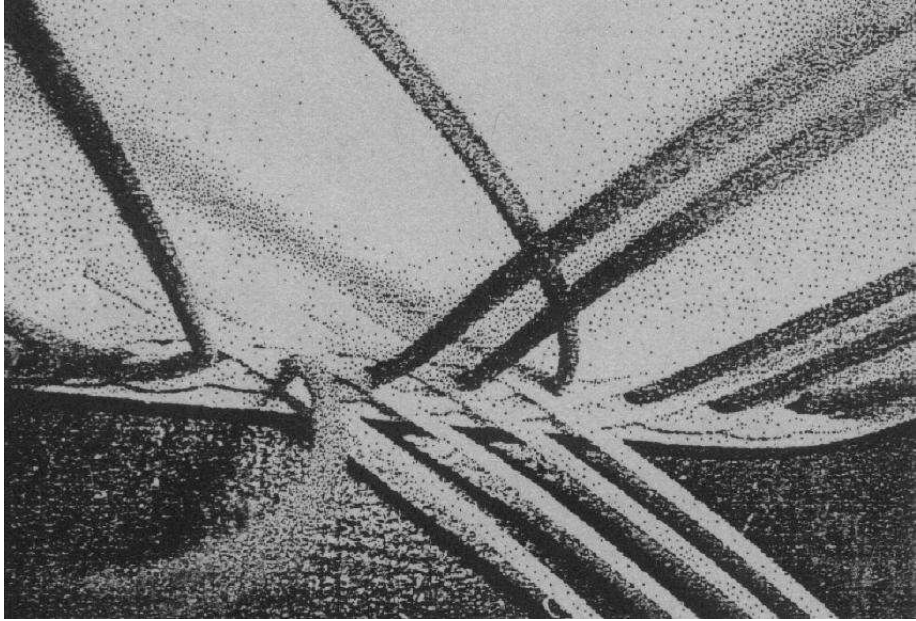


Four Rod Weave

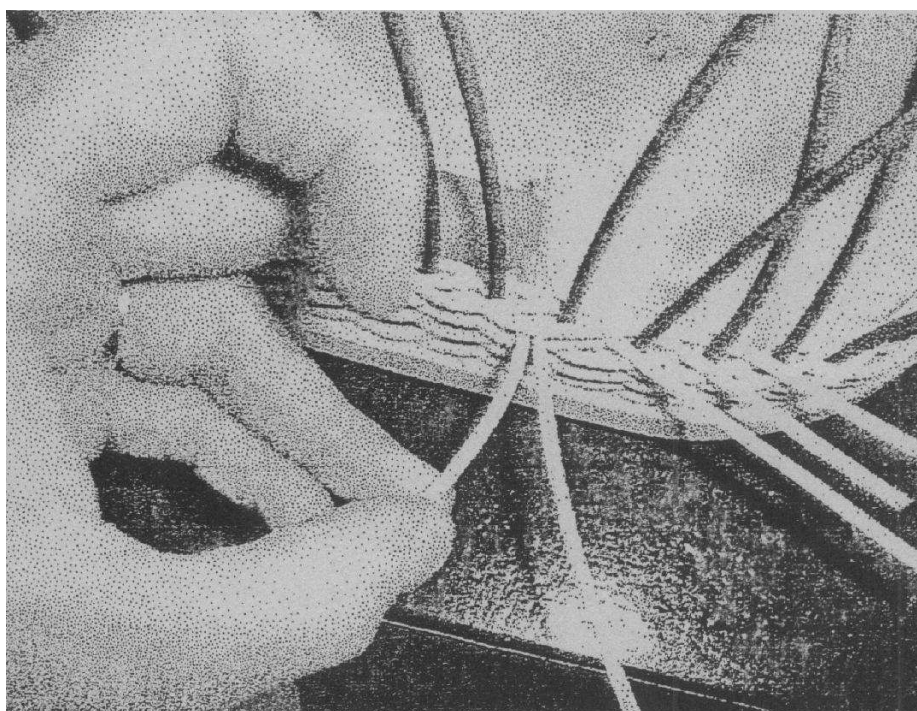
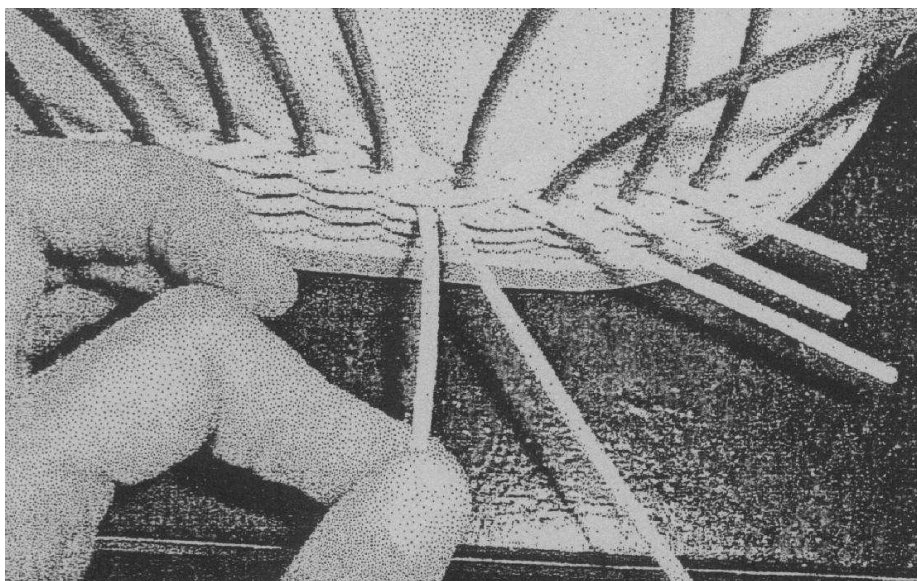




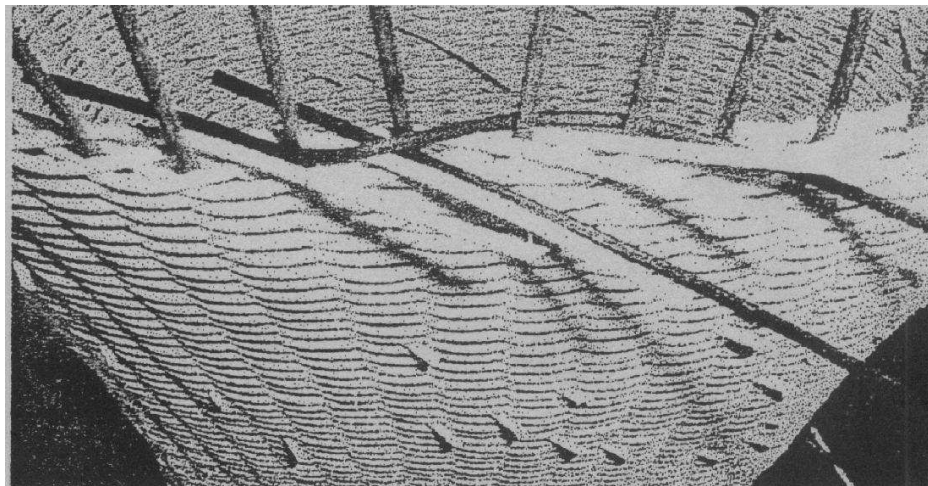
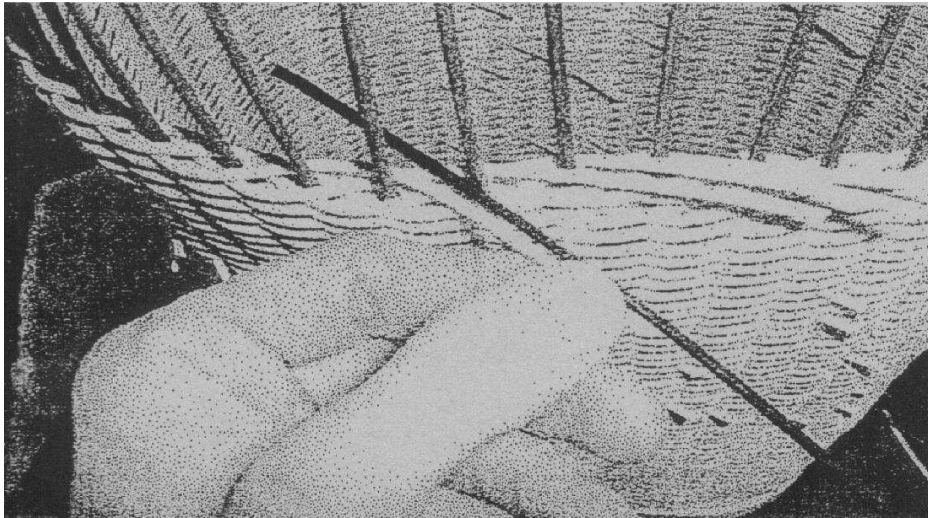




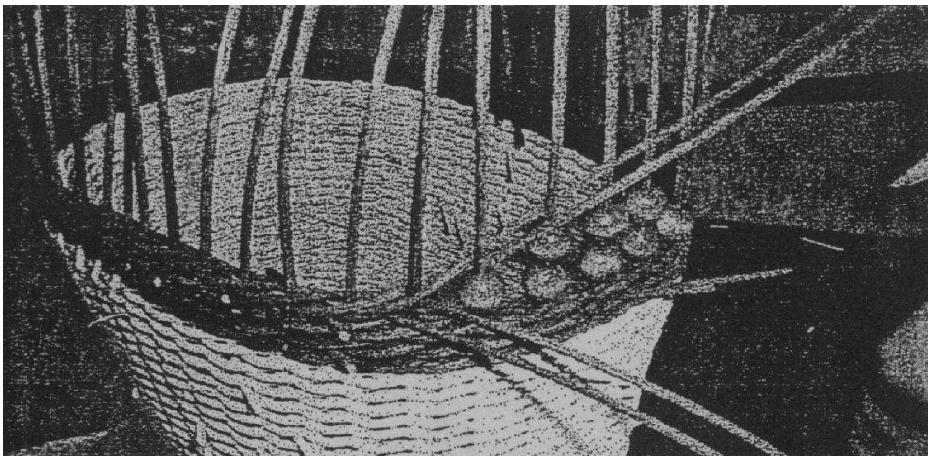
Adding a Weaver



Changing Color

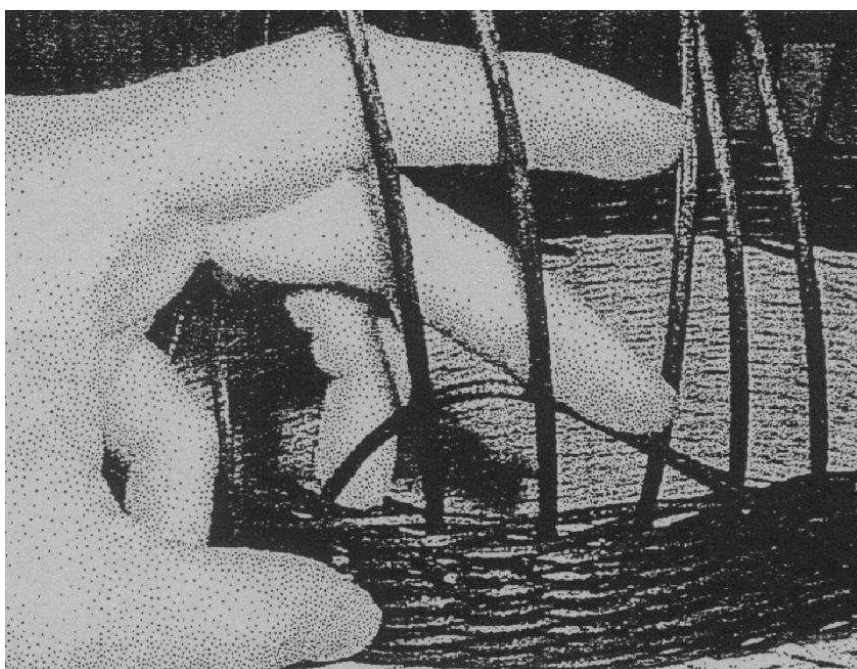
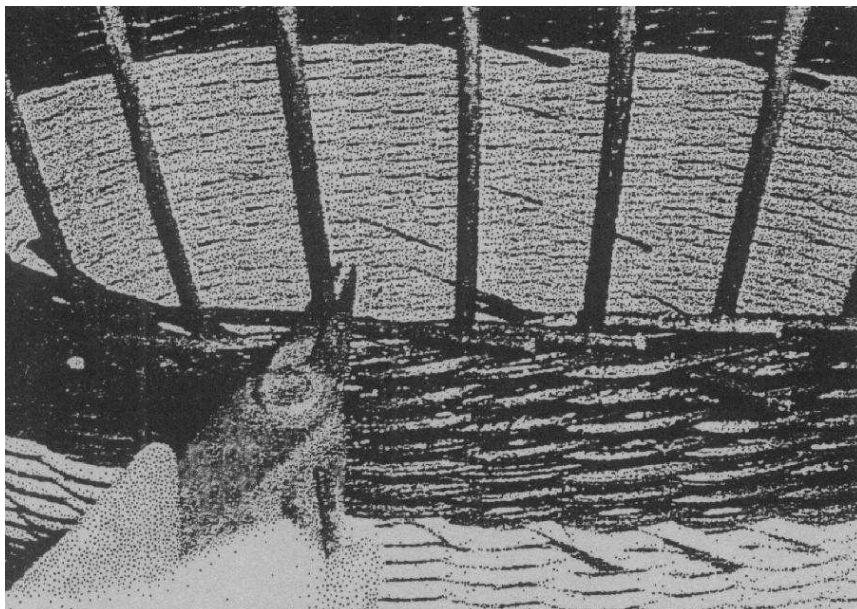


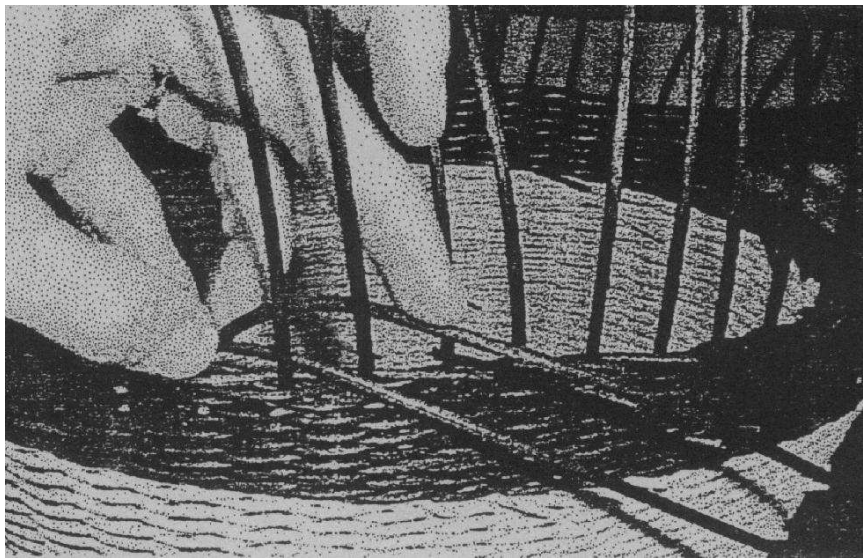
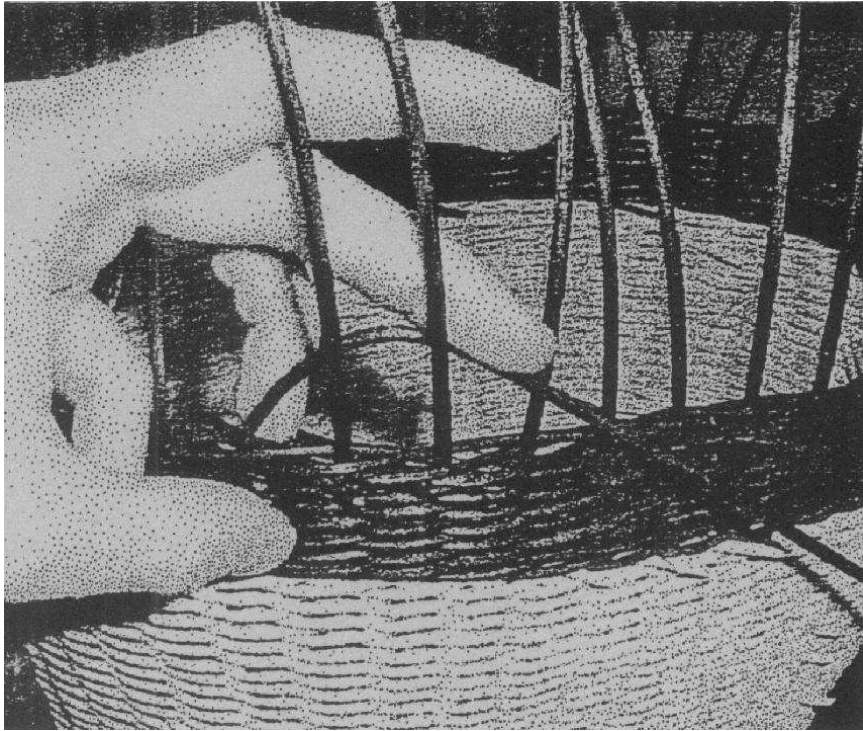
Weaving Over the Beads



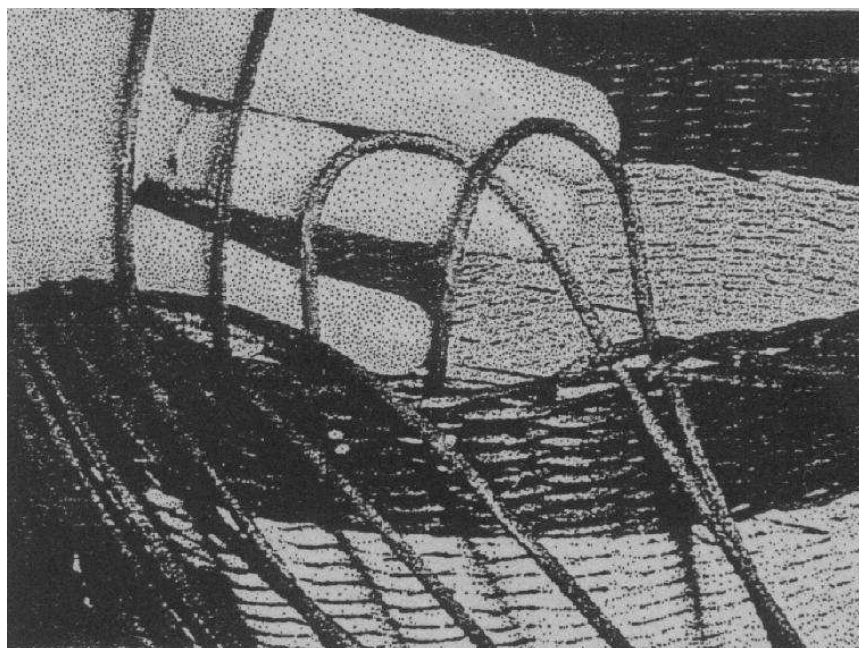
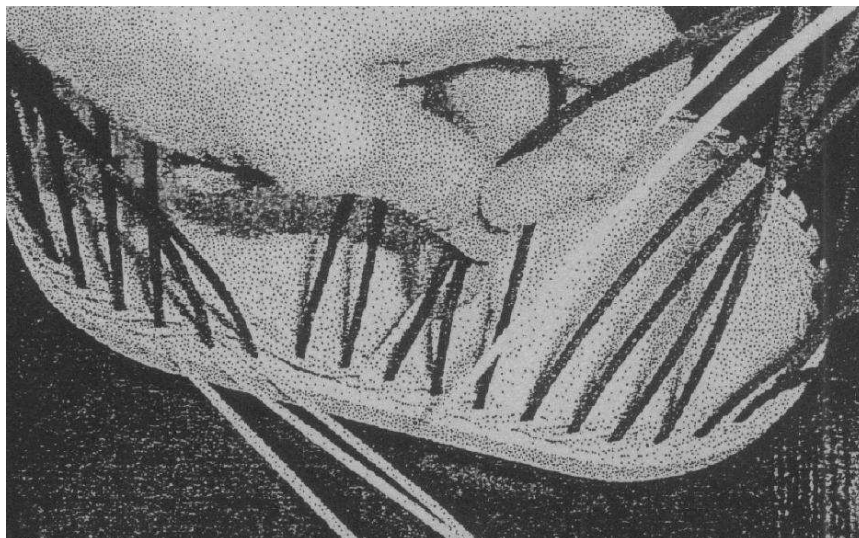
Gretchen Border

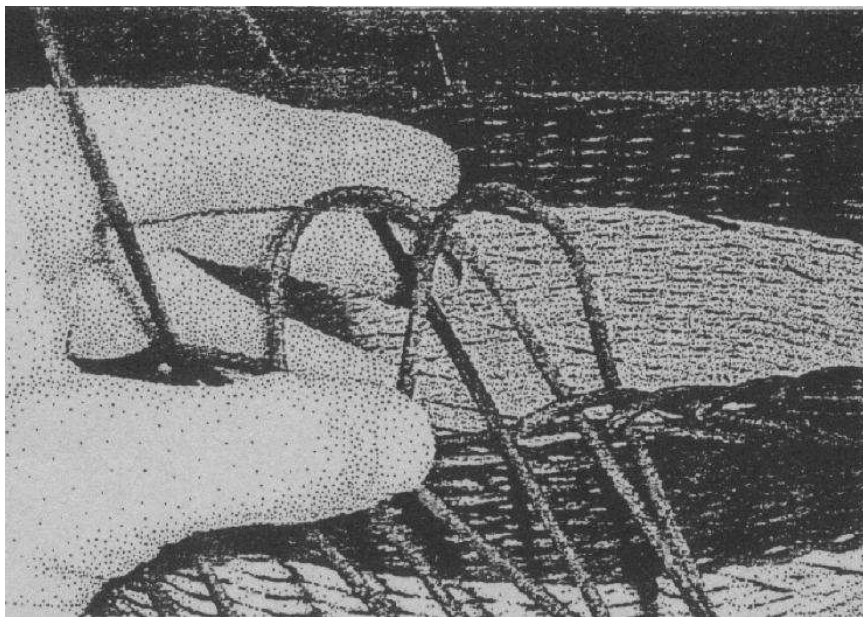
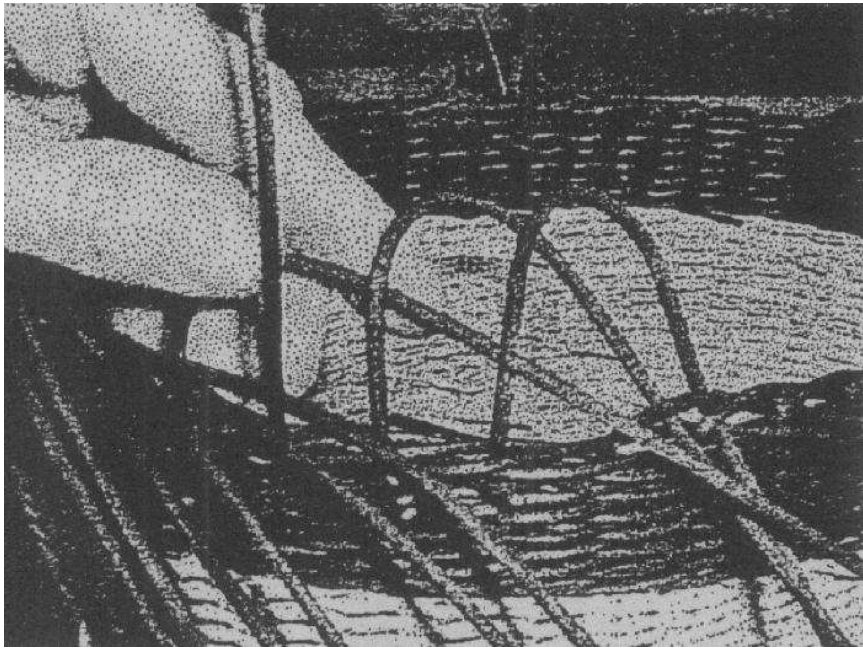
First Row

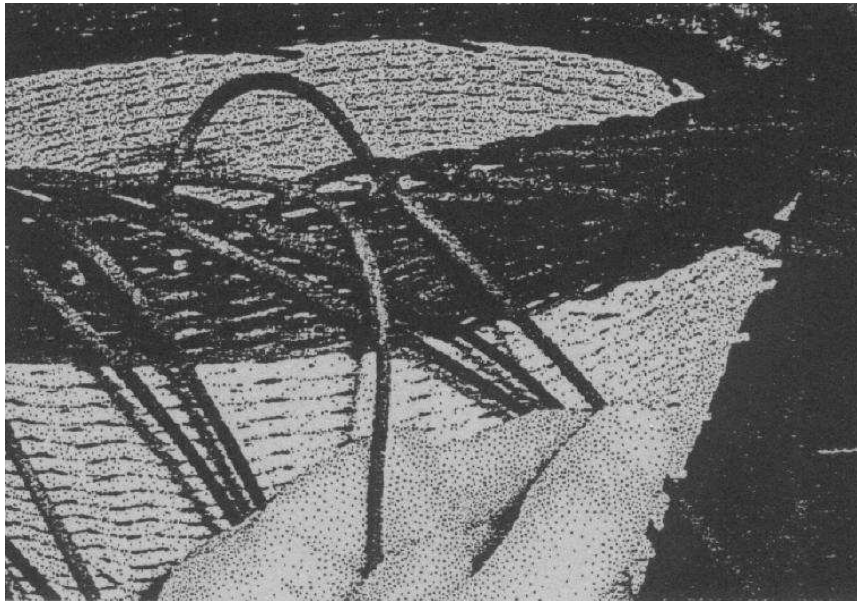




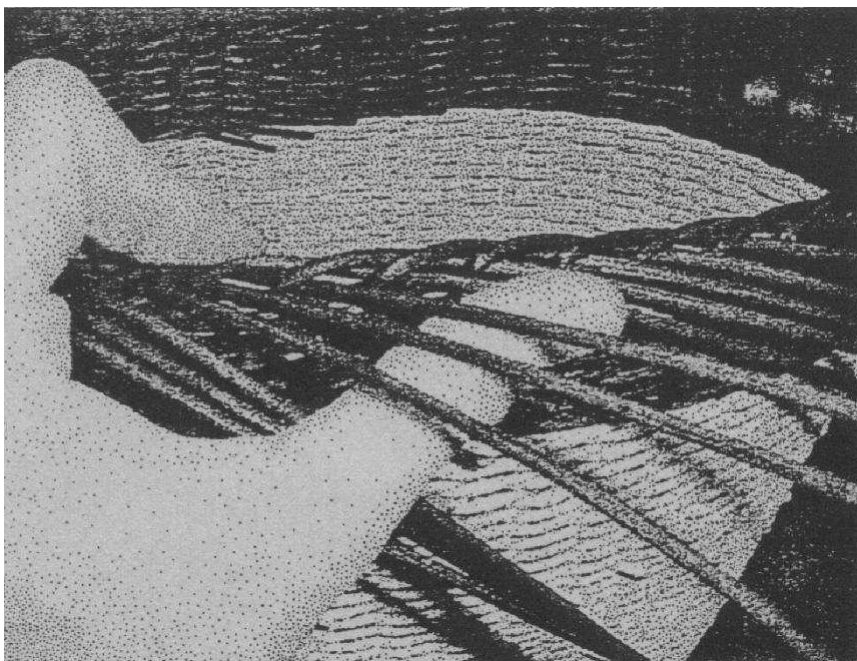
Finishing the First Row

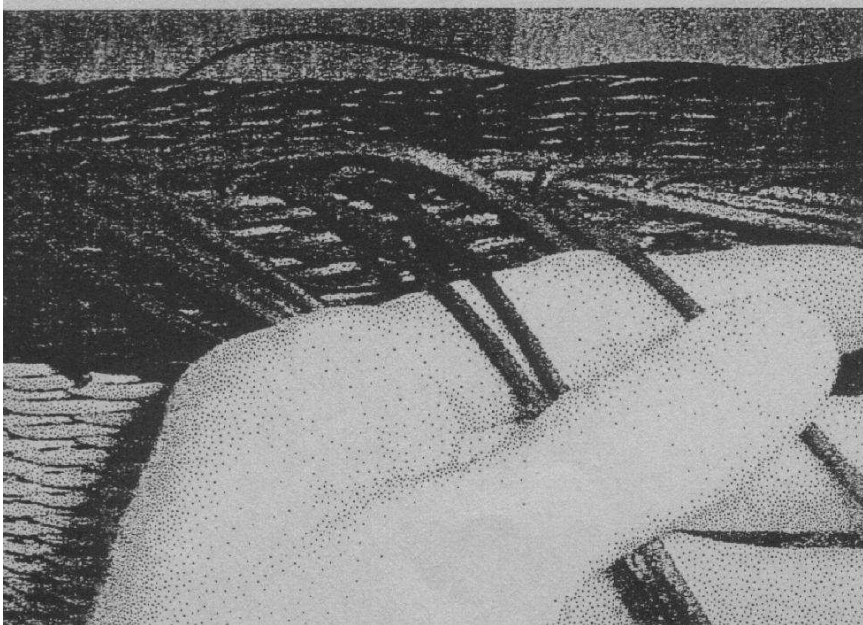
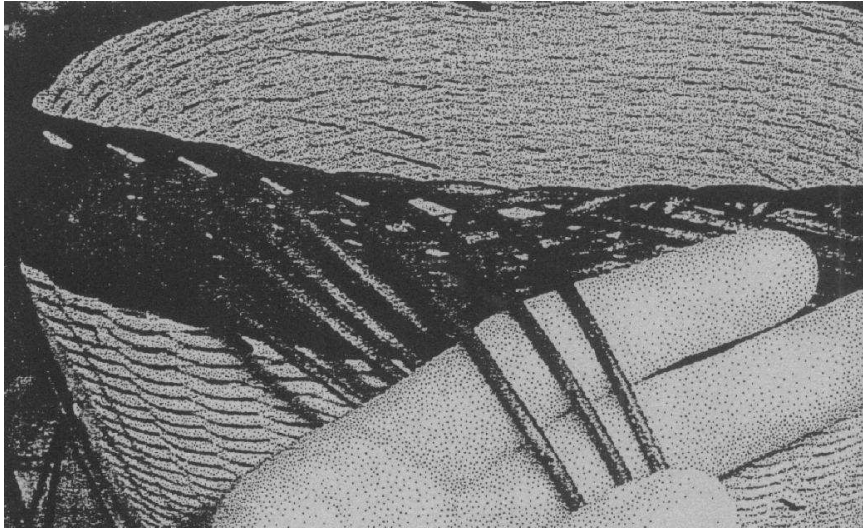


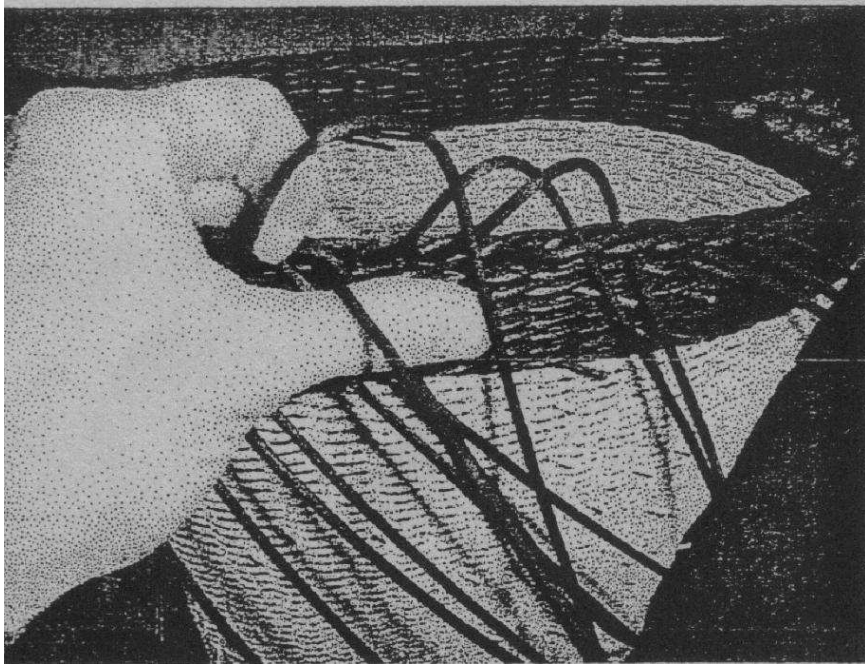
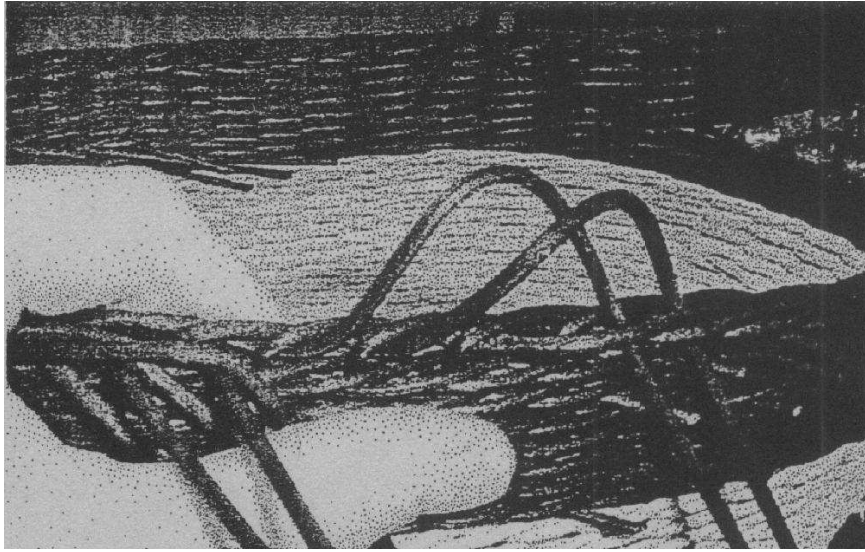


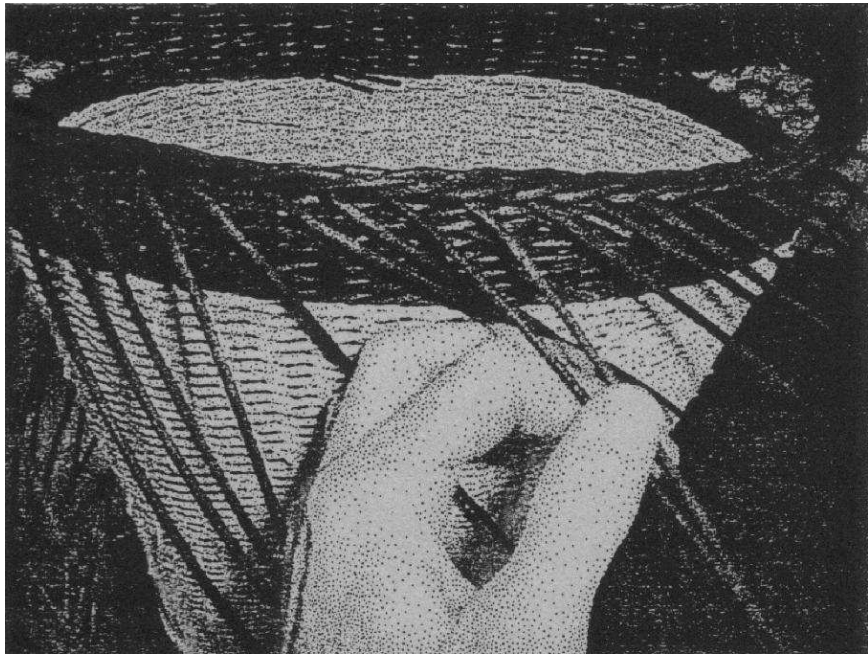
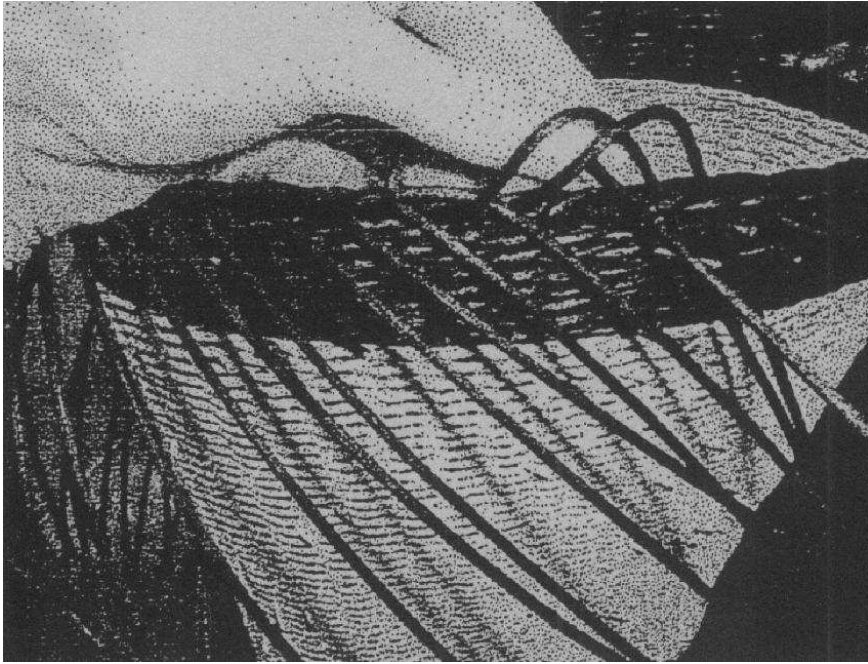


Rows 2 - 6 or 7



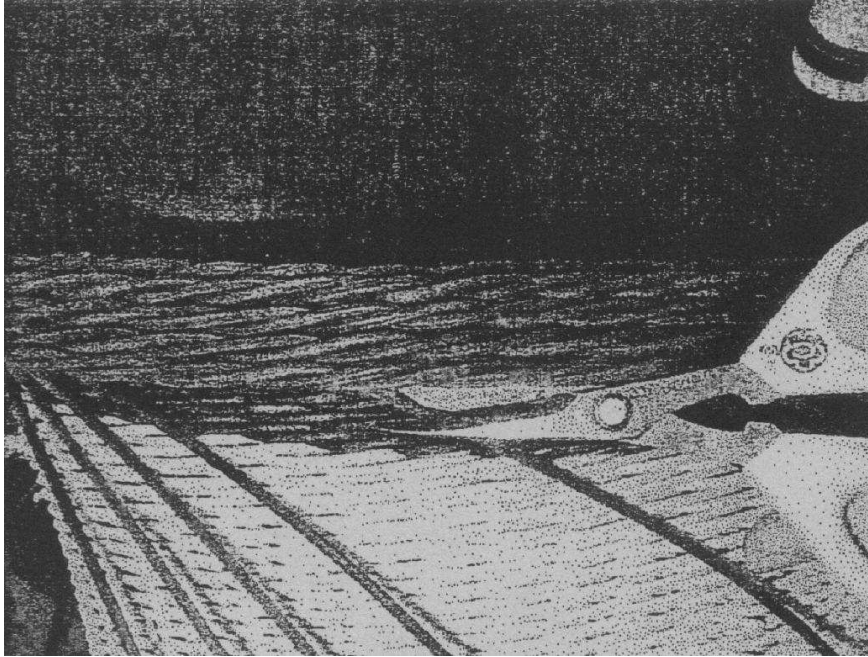






Final Trimming

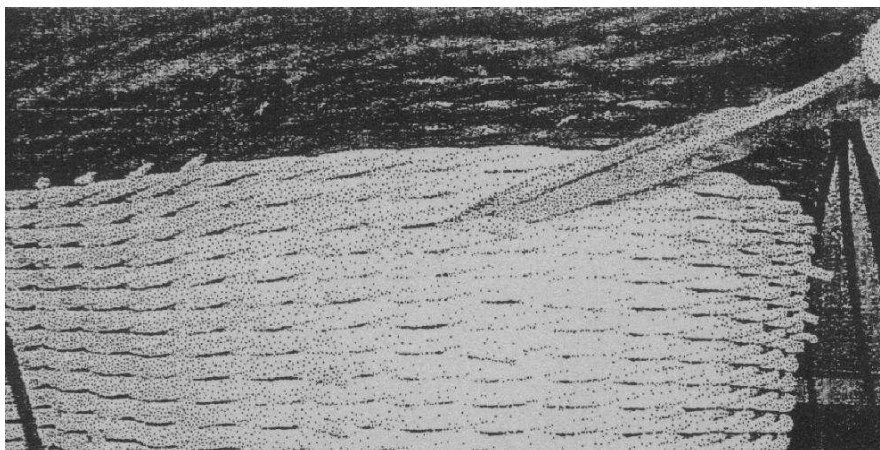
Gretchen:



Trim the tails of the spokes where they come from the Gretchen border to approximately 1/2" in length

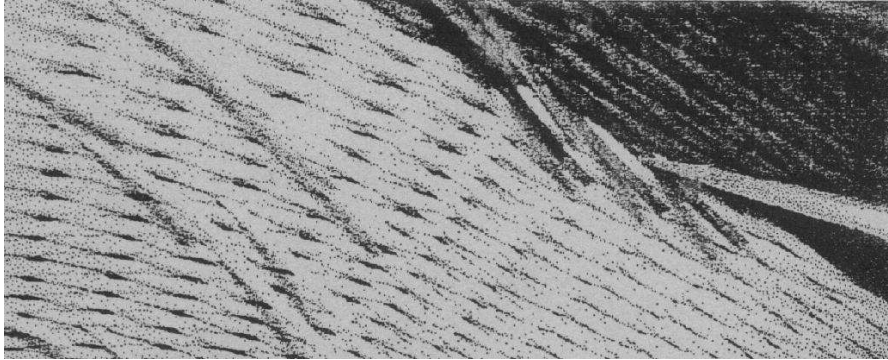
Cut with the sheers so that the cut edge is facing the basket. This makes the ends seem to disappear, rather than stick out with the cut edge showing.

Four Rod:

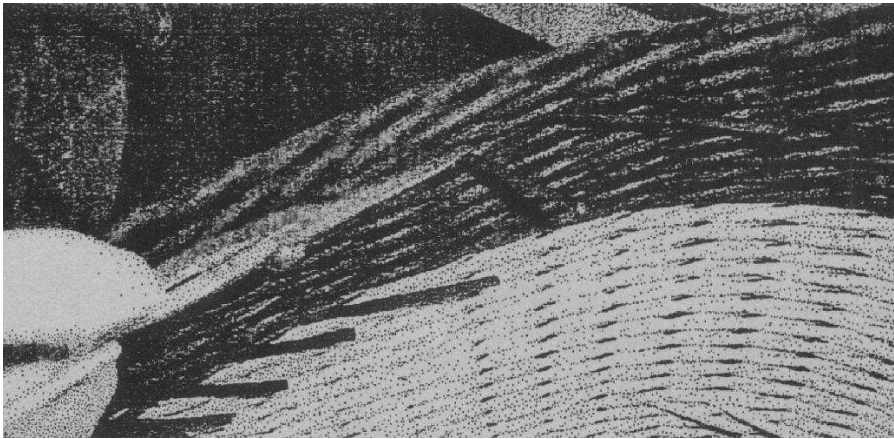


Trim the outside ends of weavers in the four rod weave with the cut edge angled downward.

Cut so the weaver reaches just beyond 1/2 way to the spoke on it's right.



Do the same on the inside start tips of your weavers. Leaving just a bit more length. You don't want the ends to miss each other!



When you are finished, you should be able to run your hands around both the inside and the outside without snagging any tails. The ends should seem to disappear and be visible only by looking from the side of the weave.

<http://doit101.com/Crafts/basketmaking.html>

Basket Making



Wrapping Rope Technique

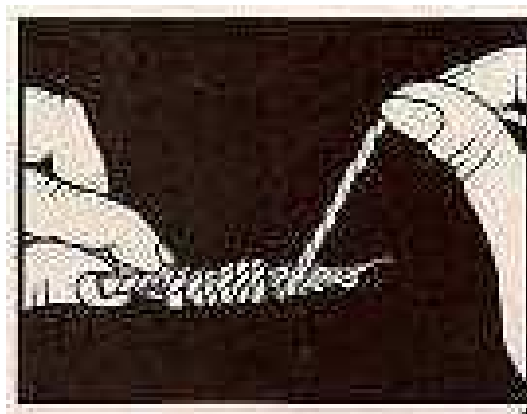
This is a contemporary version of the ancient art of Basket Making. The traditional method of basket weaving is both time-consuming and intricate. The continuous coil basket involves collecting, soaking, and preparing reed, willow, bark, and other materials before the actual weaving work begins. This method is a simple matter of wrapping yarn around a core of rope to achieve the desired texture.

Materials: For warp (the cord you will wrap the yarn around) you can use almost any kind of sturdy but flexible cord such as jute, upholstery cord, clothesline, or thin rope . The amount you will need varies according to the thickness of the cord and desired size of basket.

You can use almost any kind of yarn to wrap around warp. Heavier yarns such as multipurpose craft or rug yarns work up quickly. Knitting worsted yields a softer, fuzzier texture. You may want to experiment before tackling a basket. The yarn requirements also vary according to .the desired size of the basket, the type of yarn used, and the number of colors required for the design.

Select a blunt tapestry needle with an eye large enough to accommodate the yarn you are using.

Charting the design: First, determine what shape and size basket you want your basket to be. Usually, a low round basket is about four inches across the base, eight inches in the center at its widest point, and four inches high. To make your pattern, mark off the desired dimensions on graph paper, and draw in the shape you want . Decide on a design and color combinations, then chart it on the graph paper basket outline. If cord measures 14 inch in diameter, then one coil will be represented by one row of squares.

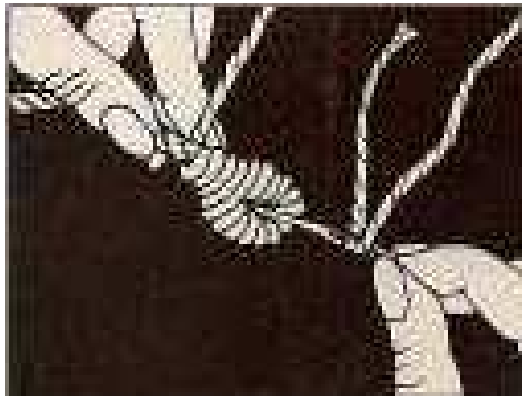


Starting the coil:

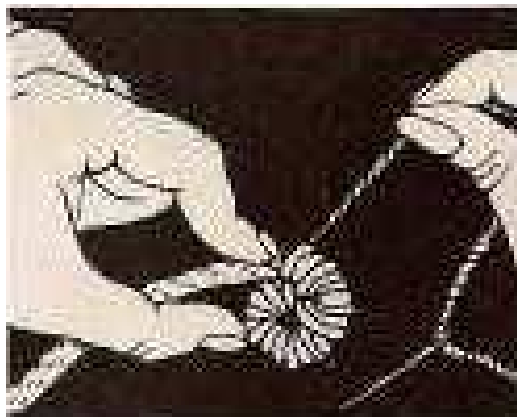
1. Taper the end of the warp cord. You can leave it in a coil or a heap on the floor by side you, pulling it out as you wrap. Cut a thirty- to thirty-six-inch length of yarn and thread one end into a tapestry needle. Begin wrapping the other end (opposite needle) around the warp cord two inches from the end, overlapping the first wind to anchor it. Wrap to about 1/2 inch from tapered end of warp cord.



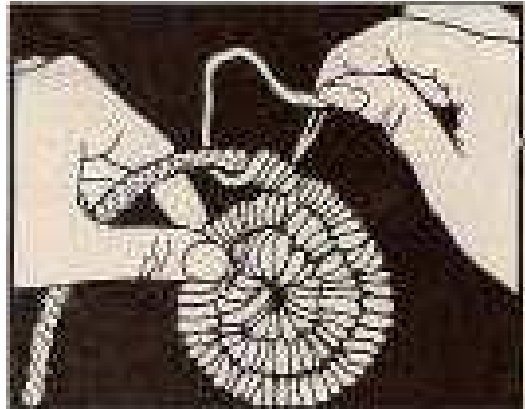
2. Bend the warp cord, then pull the yarn through the center opening, using the needle end. Hold the tapered end and begin forming a loop, wrapping the cord tightly.



3. Wrap until the tapered end is secured and firmly anchored to the warp cord. Push the needle through the center of the the loop.



4. Bend to form a coil and, using the needle end, push the yarn between the warp cord, wrapping from front to back.



5. Begin working the figure eight stitch between the coils, as shown, Wrap the yarn around the warp cord several times using the needle to push the yarn through the coil underneath and up and around to form a figure eight. Wrap very tightly. The more figure eights you make, the tighter your finished basket will be. For larger warp, such as 1/2-inch-diameter cord, you can wrap longer distances, spacing your figure eights up to 1/2 inch apart. If you begin to see gaps between the coils, then you should try to make more figure eights and place them closer together, if possible.

Adding new yarn when changing colors:

Wrap until only a few inches of the original yarn, piece remains. Position this "tail" along the warp cord and hold it tightly in place. Cut another length of yarn, thread it, and place the end opposite the needle on to the warp along the side of the tail. Hold both firmly in your left hand and wrap with your right hand.

Continue wrapping and making figure eights as usual. The tail ends will be covered by the wrapping. Use same technique for changing colors. If you are working on a section of the design where colors intermingle, or are only a short distance apart, carry both colors of yarn "along the warp" by holding the color not in use in your left hand and wrapping the color in use over it.

To change to the other color, reverse the process. However, if there are long intervals between colors, you will save yarn by clipping off the yarn of the color not in use and bringing it back in later as needed.

Placing the design: You can start your design on any side of the basket you choose but wherever you start will become the front. If you plan to have a design on the other side, start it directly opposite the design on the front. This will give you evenly centered front and back designs. You will be putting in the design from the bottom toward the top.

Follow your graph paper design or your drawing.

Shaping the coil: While you are wrapping and putting in the design, you will also need to be shaping the basket. To make straight sides, place the coils directly over each other. For sides that curve inward or outward, place top coil a little inside or outside previous coil. This will require a bit of experimentation until you have completed several different shaped baskets and can see the shapes you have produced. When starting the sides, keep the coiled base facing away from you, so that you are working on the near outside of the form at this stage.

Ending off: When you have come to the top of your basket and want to end it off, cut the warp so it extends several inches beyond your wrapping. Taper the end of the warp so it gradually decreases in size and blends into the previous coil. Wrap the tapered end until it is completely covered and then make several extra winds around it and the previous coil with the needle end to be sure you anchor the wrapping in place permanently.

Finally, run the needle back through an inch or so of the wrapped yarn; clip off excess ends and adjust so the tail is completely covered